

## **Exploring the social-structural position of a new school leader: a case study**

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Within the limited amount of social network research studying school leadership the main focus is on the influence of the school leader's position on the school's functioning (e.g. Friedkin & Slater, 1994; Spillane, 2005; Moolenaar, Slegers, & Daly, 2010). This research often concludes that school leader's legitimacy not simply stems from their hierarchical rank, but rather from the social-structural position they have in organizational social networks (Kilduff & Balkundi, 2006). Limited attention has been paid to the position of new beginning school leaders facing the challenge of socialisation in the school as well as obtaining legitimacy to lead teachers. Based on succession and organizational socialization theory, we investigate the succession of a school leader using a social network approach. The aim of this paper is to explore the social networks of a new school leader and to figure out if this aligns with how this 'newcomer' perceives his social-structural position within and beyond the school. In doing so, a case study of a Flemish secondary school is conducted, using a mixed-method approach in which we combine both quantitative social network data (ego network, the whole school network and the interschool network measures) and interview data comprising the perceptions of the new school leader concerning his/her social-structural position. We conclude with future research plans by elaborating how this study forms a first step of a longitudinal case study in which we conscientiously follow changes in the positioning of this beginning school leader over the years to distinguish different stages and mechanisms in the socialization process.